

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE

Science and Arts.

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 70.

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1855.

PRICE 1½d.

## THE ENGLISH THUGS.

THERE is a class of Thugs in India who get into friendly conversation with travellers, sit down with them at the meal-hour by the roadside, slip poison into their rice, and when they are dead, bury them under ground, and make off with their property. Our Thugs manage differently. They converse with their men with the shop-counter between; plunder them of a trifling sum by mixing with the goods they wish to purchase something that is both worthless and deleterious; and then take leave of their victims with a bow and a smirk, indifferent as to whether they live or die.

The labours of the analytical sanitary commission of *The Lancet* journal are probably fresh in the minds of our readers. We had occasion to refer to them when they first commenced, and when the public mind was moved with mingled horror and gratitude at their revelations. Their results are now issued by Dr Hassall in a collective form, the bulk of which is a significant commentary on the morality of the 'nation of shop-keepers.' *The Lancet* has cut boldly to the core of a great social disease; and although we may wince at its disclosures, we are bound to confess that the operation has been salutary and opportune. Science never entered on a more beneficent work, than that which the villainous ingenuity of those who cater to our daily necessities has prepared and forced upon her; the adulteration of the necessities of life by those through whose hands they pass from nature's great laboratory to the consumer's table, is a crime for which it is difficult, in our opinion, to find language strong enough or punishment too signal. Here are we with a plenipotentiary and costly Excise, stringent laws and summary jurisdiction at every police-court, and yet there has grown up amongst us to gigantic proportions this infamous abuse—a poison to the public health, a fraud upon the public purse, a robbery of the public revenue, and a scandal to our character as a nation. Public exposure is the first remedial measure for the evil; and the courage of the commission of *The Lancet* in publishing the names and addresses of the delinquents, together with the particulars of their guilt, cannot be too highly praised. Of the superiority of the microscope to the test-tube for general purposes of detection, there can now be no question. Chemistry was well known to be inadequate to the exact examination of the majority of solids used as food in powder or bulk—unable, for example, to determine with which of half-a-dozen farinas of similar properties a particular article might be sophisticated: and it is therefore no little satisfaction to find a means

so simple, efficient, and reliable for that purpose; available at no very great expense; and, thanks to Dr Hassall's explanations and illustrations, requiring but little care or experience. Of the effect of the exposures on the dishonest tradesmen, there are no means of judging; but, on the other hand, the result of the honourable mention of the fair dealers has been most marked and beneficial, and must have pretty cogently proved to them, and the knaves too, that, on the ground of expediency as well as morality, honesty is, after all, the best and best-paying policy.

Adulteration seems to be of two kinds—quantitative and qualitative: one, the addition to any article of consumption of inferior and cheaper substances, often prepared expressly, in order to increase the weight and bulk; the other, the use of substances improper, unnecessary, and deleterious, to impart colour, flavour, or odour. By the former, our purse suffers, and sometimes our health; by the latter, our health always, and our purse frequently. The articles subjected to this admixture and defilement comprise nearly every necessary and luxury of our common food. Bread, butter, sugar, coffee, tea, milk, pepper, mustard, cocoa, sauces, confectionary, porter, arrow-root; in short, to use the phraseology of Professor Johnston, all 'the beverages we infuse, the sweets we extract, the liquors we ferment, and the narcotics we indulge in,' are subjected, in their transit from the producer to the defrauded consumers, to one form or other of adulteration by the middleman, to his infamous profit and our loss. Almost the only consolation we have left, is in the genuineness of our leg of mutton, and in our unsophisticated potato and kail-brose.

Here is bread—the staff of weak humanity, which we confidently take to be confect of wheat-flour and water, leavened with the froth of wort—discovered to be, in every one of fifty-three samples examined, poisoned with alum. Here is sugar, the sweetener of our bitter cups, the softener of our fruit-puddings, revealed in its brown or moist development, to be in thirty-three cases out of thirty-six, not only swarming with a disgusting kind of *acarus* or louse, full of grit, fungus, fragments of cane, but frequently adulterated with potato-flour. Here is coffee, which inaugurates with the incense of its aroma the morning-meal, and closes our late dinner with the same grateful fragrance, shewn to be, as sold roasted and ground, adulterated wholesale with chicory, and the chicory with roasted peas, beans, carrots, and mahogany saw-dust. Here is tea, the comfort of single ladies, the solace of invalids, the preventer of waste and repairer of tissue in the animal economy, found frequently to be merely a *rifacimento* of exhausted leaves, coloured with black-lead for suchongs and

congoes, and with Prussian-blue, turmeric, and white powder for hysons and gunpowder. In like manner, forty-six out of fifty-six samples of cocoa contained nearly 50 per cent. of potato-flour, sago-meal, and sugar. Nearly half the arrow-root we buy is inferior or impure—a compound of sago, potato, and tapioca meals. Pure mustard, it would seem, is not to be had at any price—the whole of forty-two samples being adulterated in bulk with wheaten-flour, and in colour with turmeric powder, in atrocious proportions. Cayenne pepper is poisoned with red-lead and vermilion; and mixed for sale with ground-rice, brick-dust, turmeric, and mustard husk. Sulphuric acid is employed to whet the keen edge of vinegar, and fasten its corrosive tooth in the coats of the stomach. Green pickles owe their bright colour to the presence of copper; while the seductive splendours of bon-bons and lollipops are due to mineral poisons of varying malignity, covering a vile compound of sugar, flour, and plaster of Paris. For isinglass, we too often buy gelatine, and that at the highest price of the pure article. Sago-meal, potato-flour, and ground-rice swell the bulk of ground-ginger; while its enfeebled pungency is restored by Cayenne pepper, turmeric, and mustard husk.—Turmeric, the frequent means of adulteration, appears to be itself unadulterated, probably on account of its cheapness and freedom from duty. Cinnamon, in sticks, is often represented by cassia, an inferior spice; and in powder is seldom anything else except when potato, sago, and wheat-flour assist the fraud. Curry-powder, beneath the lens, reveals red-lead, ground-rice, salt, and turmeric-powder, amongst other unconstitutional ingredients. With regard to sauces, treacle and salt form so effectual a substitute for the extract of *dolichos soya*, as to save the pickle-makers of the metropolis an immensity of trouble in the manufacture of soy. Tomato sauce and essence of anchovies owe their generally unnatural colour to bole-armenian, which is present to such an extent in many samples, that they might, with the addition of a little turpentine, be used for the red priming applied to wood-work previous to its first coat of paint. Lard is extensively subject to the curious adulteration of potato-flour, apparently with the object of rendering it absorbent of water, and thereby increasing its weight. Water is also very generally mixed, or, we should rather say, amalgamated with butter for the same fraudulent purpose.

To the iniquity of the adulteration, moreover, there is often added the implication of a more serious crime. The drugs with which many substances used as food, or indulged in as luxuries, are sophisticated, in order to give them some unnatural quality of colour or flavour, are injurious to human life; and those who employ them, know the fact. Copper, which is used to intensify the green of pickles, is most deleterious, and has been found in *poisonous amount* in several specimens of these preserves. Cases of paralysis and dangerous illness from the use of snuff adulterated, as it frequently is, with lead, are not unfrequent; and the devotee of Cayenne pepper is exposed to the same risk. Children have often suffered severely, and some have even died, from eating the gaily-coloured productions of the confectioner's art. The alum used in the manufacture of bread is unquestionably very unwholesome; and its introduction more unpardonable, that the baker reaps no advantage from it except the equivocal one of colour. Crime is also brought home to the fraudulent

trader in another and rather curious way by Dr Hassall: 'An infant has been given an over-dose of Godfrey's Cordial [no improbable or unfrequent occurrence], and the proper remedy is a strong infusion of coffee. The coffee already in the house, as being the most readily obtained, is used, or it is bought ready ground to save time, and consists nearly or entirely of chicory. *The child dies.* Who is morally responsible in this case?' Considerations like these place the question of the adulteration of food in a far more serious light than that of simple fraud, and should not be lost sight of in taking measures for its suppression.

Public opinion or imagination appears, however, to have in some cases outstripped the reality, at least so far as the late examinations shew. Milk is often said to be adulterated with chalk, plaster of Paris, emulsion of sheep's brains, and the like filth. It is only due to the maligned dairymen of the metropolis to say, that their knavery seems to seek in general no aid beyond that of the iron cow, with whose limpid stream they dilute pretty freely the richer secretion of the Alderneys and Guernseys. Coffee has been suspected of adulteration with burnt blood, and similar abominations; nothing worse than chicory or roasted beans was discovered by *The Lancet*. Cheap tea is often supposed to consist of all kinds of leaves of British plants. No instance of this fraud came under notice, although seizures have recently been made by the Excise of large quantities of spurious teas; and although, in a midland town not long ago, an old gentleman of our acquaintance, after long suspicion of the quality of his congo, being somewhat of a botanist, made a *hortus siccus* of the contents of his tea-pot upon blotting-paper one morning, when five different sorts of British foliage appeared upon the tell-tale sheet: whereupon, we may add, the detected tradesman informed him that 'no gentleman would have done such a thing.' Bread—London bread—to country ears, denotes a compound of alum, potatoes, horse-chestnuts, bone-dust, chalk, and plaster of Paris. Alum alone of these desirable ingredients revealed its iniquitous presence in the metropolitan loaf. *Cocculus indicus*, *capicum*, grains of paradise, copperas, liquorice, quassia, and salt, are considered to form at least some of the ingredients in London stout; yet only the last substance, qualified occasionally with a little treacle, was detected. Finally, the specimens of cigars examined were found, except one, which was a mere sham, to consist altogether of tobacco, though frequently of an inferior sort. In the majority of articles, however, we need scarcely say that the suspicions of the public have not been unwarranted, and that a system of fraud has been revealed, which the strong arm of the legislature should be put forth to extirpate.

One excuse the retailers occasionally have—besides some absurd or dishonest ones they set up for themselves—is that of ignorance. No doubt, the manufacturer is frequently the real, and sometimes the only culprit. This has been made evident in one or two articles, of which we may specify mustard, as affording a shameful example of adulteration, on the largest scale, habitually practised by wholesale dealers, whose position as British merchants one would have expected to warrant them against the bare suspicion of such a thing. But this only shews to what an extent the thirst for gain has undermined the mercantile character which was once our national boast.

There is another collateral and conjoint abuse that Dr Hassall's book exposes, and to our very great

satisfaction. It is the detestable system of puffery, which seems to have completely beridden our trade and manufacture, and which is, we are bold to say, an ill omen for its future. A puff is an organised lie, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a cloak for deliberate fraud. That is our experience, and we appeal to the public for its confirmation. Now, let any one consider the number of these vaunting falsehoods that disfigure the modern retail-trade, and say whether their effect is likely to be so harmless as the framers of them would assert. We not long ago heard a fine old patriarchal metropolitan preacher declare from the pulpit, that he believed the system of lying advertisements to be one of the crying sins of this age; and we quite agree with him. Advertising is one thing, lying is another. It is lawful for a man to court publicity either in the newspapers, or at railway-stations, or on dead-walls, and to have his name shouted down the street, as Ruskin says, by gold letters two feet high, if he likes; but it is not lawful, and a heinous crime for him, to entice customers by inflated falsehoods and a fulsome parade of honesty and low prices, that he may swindle them with the greater success. Accordingly, we are not sorry or surprised to find that the articles and compounds of food most outrageously puffed have generally presented the most remarkable adulteration; and, as Dr Hassall observes, their vendors are doubly guilty—first, of the fraud; and, secondly, of a lie to recommend it.

And now comes the question—What are we to do in the face of all this knavery? This is a dreadful book of Dr Hassall's: it has destroyed our faith in eatables. We don't know what to believe in or to trust. Our palate will fear to endorse anything for the confiding acceptance of the stomach, without a microscopic warranty from the eyes. We shall not dare to use brown sugar, for fear of founding an internal population of acari, or laying the ineradicable seeds of fungoid atrophy; we must forswear Cayenne pepper to our deviled kidney, from dread of paralysis; we must consign the contents of our pickle-jar to the dust-heap; and every morning, after breakfast, shall be experiencing the 'general heaviness, and indisposition to bodily and mental exertion, which are consequent on potations of chicory;' or anticipating the more alarming results of the ferro-cyanide of iron we have imbibed with our green tea. In short, we shall be in the same agreeable state of nervous apprehension as an Italian territorial magnate who has had a difference with his family, and finds his cook in correspondence with the heir-apparent. However, there are remedies to a certain extent for our difficulties. We can use white sugar instead of brown; we can buy our coffee whole, and grind it—although actually the fictitious berry is said to be machine-cut by wholesale out of all sorts of substances, with a *vraisemblance* and ingenuity worthy of the 'cute Yankee, who palmed hickory hams and mahogany nutmegs on the wide-awake public of the States. We can make and bake our bread at home; we can wash our green tea in a little cold water before using it; we can pickle our own French beans and gherkins, and forbid the cook to boil half-pence with them, as *Raffald's English Housekeeper* directs; or to concoct, with verdigris, alum, vinegar, and salt, the salutiferous 'greening' recommended in *Modern Cookery*. We can buy our pepper and our mustard entire, like our coffee, and grind them ourselves; or procure them, with our arrow-root, and other condiments and spices, in a state of nature from Apothecaries' Hall. We can stop the consumption of painted lollipops and bon-bons,—most objectionable even in their purest state—by our children. We can filter our water, eschew public-house stout, and stick to Bass and Allsopp's bitter ale. Finally, if we are in the country, we can get pure milk; if condemned to the city, we can thank Heaven the adulteration of our meagre 'sky-blue' is nothing

worse than *aqua pumpaginis* in any respectable neighbourhood. But what is the poor man to do, to whom these remedies, simple as they are, would present themselves in the dreary light of impracticableness? He cannot afford to buy hand-mills, or wait while the coffee is ground for his scant and hurried breakfast; his wife has no time to spare from her four or five children to bake or make preserves, and her house has no appliances for the purpose. He is, as usual, the greatest sufferer by the social evil. To a certain extent he is in the power of the tradesman, and all he can do is to avoid the unscrupulous and fraudulent; to shun cheap provisions as he values health and economy; to beware of all shops which resort to puffing, and especially such as profess to sell 'the cheapest and the best' things—for the two qualities are incompatible; and to trust that the bold and circumstantial exposure of the system of adulteration by the press will check the progress of an abuse under which all classes of the community suffer, and teach the dishonest manufacturers and dealers that their cunning arts of fraud, though eluding occasionally the subtle tests of chemistry, lie bare and guilty beneath the keen bright eye of the microscope and in the righteous vision of God.

It is perfectly clear, however, that ulterior and authoritative measures must be put in force, if we are to attempt the suppression of the evil with any likelihood of success. The crime being ascertained, and its perpetrators identified, it is for the legislature to step in and punish; 'an eligible opportunity now offers' for a Home Minister to acquire popularity. Medical and chemical science has no constitutional function, although it is obvious that many of its branches might either be advantageously engaged in the service of the state, or should be encouraged by governmental aid. Now, in what more important work could it be employed than in investigating throughout the kingdom the condition of articles of consumption, and enabling the state to protect the poor from the dishonest, and to punish a class of offenders who have hitherto escaped justice? The extent to which the crime of adulteration is carried, invests the question with national magnitude; and we have no doubt that a sound and efficient scheme for the purpose would receive the cordial sanction of the legislature. The outline of such a scheme is laid down by Dr Hassall, and comprehends a central board, or commission, with examining inspectors at all the more considerable import and export towns, and in all the large inland towns.

To bring this into operation, it would be only necessary to remodel the detective department of the existing Excise establishment, and to invest it with rather more summary authority than it at present possesses. The expense and working-cost of the new system would, therefore, be next to nothing. The only point that seems to us questionable is, whether the centralisation of the authority would be so desirable as its division among local boards or commissions. The jurisdiction and punishment to be prompt, as it undoubtedly should be, must be local, and the examination and conviction should be local too. In this there would be no difficulty. The inspector would deliver his suspected samples to a local board, instead of a distant central one; he himself would be more under control, and have a readier resort for instructions in any case requiring them. Local boards of health act well enough, and their relation to the central office in London would be imitated by the local boards of analysis. With the lucid directions of Dr Hassall, so moderate is the amount of experience and application requisite for the effective use of the microscope, that any medical man might soon qualify himself for the membership of a local analytical commission; while in cases of intricacy, requiring more elaborate investigation and greater experience, the articles might be forwarded to the central board,



which would of course be composed of the first scientific men.

At all events, whether this system or that be adopted, something must speedily be done, if we do not mean to deserve the appellation of a nation of thugs, as well as that of a nation of shopkeepers.

### THE SERF MARRIAGE.

A GROUP of girls were collected round the door of an isba, or log-hut, in the village of Gorky, belonging to General Petrovich. They were all dressed in the national costume of the government of Toula, consisting of a long white gown, over which they wore a plaid worsted tunic, short and narrow, while a low bodice, with narrow shoulder-straps, confined a loose puffed white muslin chemise. Their hair was combed off the face in one long plait, from which hung a profusion of ribbons of all colours down their backs; a quantity of bright-coloured glass-beads hung on each side of their faces, and round their necks: these formed the more ornamental items of their dress, which was otherwise only completed by a very thick and serviceable pair of leathern shoes.

By the earnestness of their gestures, and the apparent interest of their conversation, it was easy to see something unpleasant had lately occurred. After a little time, they all dispersed except two, who remained at the door of the hut spinning, between whom the following conversation took place:—

'Nadegda, dost thou really believe the master will oblige one of us girls to marry that ugly, ill-tempered fellow, Kit? What possible inducement is there? He possesses neither horse nor cow; his isba is in the worst condition of any in the village; and beside his own devilish propensities—that are only safely to be encountered when one makes the holy sign and prays to St Sergius—he has his old witch of a grandmother, and his bedridden mother, for his wife to work and care for. No; most certainly not one of us girls will consent to have him.'

'As to that, Katinka, thou sayest true; but from what I heard my father say yesterday, the master is determined none of the strong, hard-working lads are to be sent as soldiers; and, as thou well knowest, while single they are all liable to be taken as recruits.'

'Tell me again,' said the first speaker, 'what said thy father. Unfortunately this news comes from good authority; who should know better than the sarosta\* what is doing in the village?'

'I'll gladly tell thee all I know,' replied the sarosta's daughter. 'Last night, when my father came home, he told us that Borisoff, the land-steward, had received letters from our master, telling him that all the family are coming here immediately to spend a year. Owing to some severe losses sustained at cards, his excellency comes down to live quiet and economise. Several of the free servants have been discharged; and for fear any of the good hands should be taken by the recruiting-party, he has sent orders they shall all marry. Now, Peter the blacksmith is betrothed to Nadine, and they will be glad enough to get the wedding over. Paul has received the same orders; and I know more than one girl who would not refuse him. Eh, Katinka, why bluest thou?'

'Hold thy nonsense, Nadegda, and finish thy story: this is no joking matter.'

'Well, the end is this, dusha mia (my soul). As to the other lads, they are well enough off to buy themselves wives from the crown-villages; but who Kit will find I know not, for his reputation of casting the Evil

Eye is well known hereabouts, and, besides, dreadful things are told of his family.'

'For Heaven's sake, do not talk more about him,' said Katinka, turning towards the church, and signing herself devoutly; 'I shall dread going to sleep to-night for fear of bad dreams. But thou, happy Nadegda, thou hast no fear of being forced to marry against thy will: thy father, being the sarosta, will be able to screen thee; but what say I? Perhaps thou also lovest one of the lads now about to marry. Confess—art thou also betrothed?'

'Oh, Katinka, think not of it: it would be no worse for me to marry Kit than any other lad in the village. I love—yes; but not one in my own station—a free man. Dost thou remember Vladimir, the master's handsome Moscow coachman? Well he, God bless him! has promised to buy my freedom, and marry me.' Before Nadegda had well done speaking, her companion burst into a fit of laughter.

'And art thou fool enough to believe him? Why did he not marry thee at once, instead of putting it off?'

'Because my master asked a high price for my freedom, more than Vladimir then possessed,' answered Nadegda; 'and also because my father could not then give me the dowry Vladimir required, for, remember, when I am his wife I shall no longer wear the village-dress. I am to have a fur cloak, two silk dresses, besides a feather-bed and linen. Father has saved up three hundred roubles in money for us; and as the young girl spoke, she drew herself up with all the pride of a serf about to become free.'

They had scarcely resumed their spinning-wheels, when the sound of post-bells in the distance reached their ears. Moujiks were seen running in all directions, crying, 'Here comes the master!' and as the carriages approached nearer, they all uncovered their heads, and assisted to push the heavy equipages up the steep hill leading to the house; several girls standing near also bowed their heads to the ground, saying: 'Welcome, father and master. Welcome, my mistresses, among your own people. May the Lord bless your high nobility!'

As the general descended, he bowed to all around, and extended his hand for those nearest him to kiss. The ladies stopped also to speak kindly to some of the women and children, and their hands were also covered with kisses. As they passed into the house, the peasants separated to their respective homes. Nadegda alone remained loitering about until late, but she had a companion who stopped to talk with her as he passed and repassed; nay, more, once was he actually seen to kiss her. Yes, the serf-girl was happy: Vladimir was true.

That evening Borisoff was closeted for some hours with the general; and when he left him, the expression of his face was somewhat discomposed and ruffled. The subject of their conference will be learned in the sequel.

Early the next morning, Borisoff sent for the sarosta, Nadegda's father, and after giving him orders for the day's work, addressed him thus: 'Sarosta, hast thou attended to the orders I gave thee respecting the young men's marriages, those named on his excellency's list? If not, see to it without loss of time, for thy master has had great losses, and needs all the good workmen; and, what is more, his temper is not improved under the circumstances, and the lads will be worked all the harder, I promise thee.'

'Your honour will be pleased to hear,' replied the old man, 'that I have arranged that matter as well as possible. All the lads will be mated this week, except that surly fellow Kit, who, as your honour knows, is no favourite in the village, and not one of the wenches will consent to have him. Indeed, I pity the poor thing who would have to wait upon his old folks, who are no better than they should be, if all is true that one hears.'

\* The sarosta is an old peasant, of a somewhat superior station, put over the others to drive them to their work, and see the orders of the land-steward punctually carried out.

'As to that, sarosta, thou must arrange it as best thou canst; it is as much as my place is worth to tell the general his commands have not been obeyed. Remember, thou hast now received the order, and it rests entirely with thee. Hast thou held out any reward to the girls? Or, if that does not have the desired effect, hast thou promised them a flogging all round? See what that would do.'

'I fear, your honour,' resumed the sarosta, 'it would be of no avail; for it is the belief of them all that Kit throws the Evil Eye, and even the little children run and hide from him as he comes up the village. However, I will certainly do my best.'

On their return from work, the sarosta assembled all the girls, and tried in vain the powers of persuasions and threatenings. Kit was supposed to have something devilish about him; and as the sarosta himself shared in the superstition, he determined to lay the case before his master, although not without fear of the consequences.

The next morning, as the general sat in his elegantly furnished study, smoking a troupkat, the sarosta was announced. General Petrovich ordered him to be admitted immediately. The old man entered; and first turning to the picture hanging in the room, crossed himself devoutly, then bowed low to his master. The general returned the salutation, and then bade him make known his business.

'Your high nobility deigned to order, a day or two ago, that certain of your peasants were to marry, on account of the recruits being taken this summer. Your excellency's commands have been obeyed in all respects save one, for which I humbly beg pardon. Kit, as your excellency doubtless remembers, was always a strange surly fellow.'

'But a good and steady workman,' interrupted the master.

The sarosta proceeded: 'None of the wenches relish the idea of being his wife; and, indeed, to be plain with your high nobility, they one and all refuse to have anything to do with him. Perhaps your excellency would be pleased to countermand the order, and let him join the recruiting-party. The whole village would rejoice to be rid of him.'

'Old fool!' exclaimed the general, 'dost thou think I am going to part with one of my best hands because you ignorant dogs think he is bewitched? Since when have the sluts dared to have a will of their own? It is high time, indeed, I come among you, to teach you your master's authority! Go, old dog; I'll see he gets a wife. The she-devils shall draw lots for him, and thy daughter into the bargain, to punish thee for thy disobedience; and think thyself well off that I send not for a bundle of rods for thee. Begone, dog, or I will strike thee to the earth!' So raved the general in his anger at being thwarted; the old sarosta, trembling and silent, bowed and left the room.

Borisoff, the land-steward, was next sent for, and ordered to collect the next morning all the girls above the age of eighteen. 'And mind,' added the general, 'they are all forthcoming—the more the merrier. It will be quite an event in the village, drawing lots for a husband.'

At the hour specified next day, all the maidens were to be seen slowly making their way to the house. The sarosta had hard work to make them advance, for they were all more or less terrified at the idea of Kit falling to their share. But none of them looked so pale as poor Nadezda; only the night before, everything had been settled for the purchase of her freedom. She really loved Vladimir, and was beloved by him. Occasionally, she raised her eyes to see if she could catch sight of him; but he, poor fellow, was not there; although free himself, he dared not dispute the rights of the slaveholder.

In vain did the sarosta expostulate, and try to

console the poor girl, by telling her how many chances there were in her favour; but Nadezda seemed to be weighed down by a presentiment of evil, and cried bitterly: 'Oh! why was I born? Oh! why did I not die before this hour of misery?'

As they approached, the general stepped out upon the balcony, followed by the wretched and unpopular Kit. No sooner did they perceive the latter, than the girls began calling him every horrid name they could think of; all but Nadezda—she had fainted. They were placed in rows in front of the balcony, and Borisoff presented the general with a hat containing the fifty pieces of paper, amongst which was the one with the fatal cross marked on it. The general stood on the steps of the balcony, and, desiring that none should open her paper until the hat was emptied, the ceremony began. One by one, the trembling girls made the sign of the cross, then thrust in her hand and drew out a paper. All were taken, one only remained, and Nadezda alone was left to take it; she approached, faintly and feebly, supported by her father. But while in the act of extending her hand to draw the lot, her father began to speak.

'Silence!' thundered the general. 'Unfold your papers.'

As they did so, they screamed with delight: 'It is not I!' 'It is not I!' and threw themselves with their faces on the ground, to thank the saints for their protection. In the midst of this general rejoicing, a piercing shriek was heard which made them all shudder: it came from the unfortunate Nadezda. She had drawn the fatal cross—a cross which must be borne, as such was the will of her earthly master.

She threw herself at the general's feet, and in the most imploring accents besought him. 'Father, have mercy upon me! Master, do with me what thou wilt; make me work night and day; put me in the meanest office, and I will not complain; but I cannot marry him!'—and she pointed to Kit. 'Beat me, master; kill me, if you will, and I would thank you on my knees; but think of what you are doing. Remember, I am'—Betrothed, she would have added; but the general roared out with rage:

'Take her away! take her away!' And turning to the sarosta: 'Teach your daughter to behave herself in future, and not to have such high-flown ideas. Mind, I will have the wedding over by to-night.' So saying, he turned away: the old man lifted up his fair daughter in his arms, and carried her away, without a word; he dared not remonstrate or revolt.

The same evening, Nadezda—heretofore the pride and beauty of the village, but now pale, cold, and automaton-like—was married to Kit, the general himself witnessing the ceremony. When it was over, he turned to the husband. 'Well, my lad, if the girls would not have thee of their own freewill, thou mayest at least thank thy master for the prettiest lass in the whole village.'

There was no merry-making at that wedding; the peasants returned to their homes with heavy and resentful hearts; but not one slept that night until they had implored the blessings of the saints on the unfortunate Nadezda.

That day-week, the general took a drive through his domains. The driver, as usual, was Vladimir, the Moscow coachman, a man so skilful in his business, so careful, so conscientious, that when the reins were in his hands such a thing as an accident was unknown. On that day, the disappointed bridegroom, it may be supposed, was not exactly as happy as when talking to poor Nadezda about their marriage. At anyrate, it was noticed that he was deathly pale, and that his features had a hard, rigid, stony look: but perhaps this was fancy. It may be that his feelings were not the more agreeable from the sight of Kit's isba as he drove past, and from the pale weebegone face in the interior

that at the view fitted across his imagination like a spectre. Whether this spectre continued to haunt him during the drive, and to glide and float before the horses' heads so as to dazzle and mislead his vision, no man knows. The only thing that is certain is, that the carriage was upset, and the general, with some difficulty extricated from the shattered vehicle, mortally hurt. He survived only a few hours, and then he died in great agony.

Just before he breathed his last, he murmured: 'He has cast the Evil Eye on me:' but no one understood what he meant.\*

#### THE FENS OF ENGLAND—THEIR DRAINAGE AND RECLAMATION.

It is difficult to say at what phase of its history the Fen District was first trodden by human foot. All probabilities, and the small circumstantial evidence that exists, seem, however, to indicate that it was not until the last geological change had passed over the country. During the forest era, wild animals alone appear to have tenanted its solitudes. Their bones have been found in considerable quantities, preserved in the antiseptic peat that, when living, was their covert—in its decay, their grave. But it is remarkable that they are unaccompanied by any human remains. Had the glades of the forest been inhabited by a wild race of hunters, it is scarcely possible but that some must have perished together with the savage objects of their chase, in the sudden inundation that attended the last subsidence. But not a mortal relic exists in evidence. Several canoes, of very primitive structure, have been exhumed, which seem rather to lead to the conclusion, that our painted ancestors must have found the district a country of lakes and swamps, rather than one of wood; and have paddled into its great wastes out of curiosity, or in search of fowl and fish, rather than have made them a place of abode. Hither, however, they fled in great numbers, before the invading soldiers of Rome, who encircled the entire district with a chain of forts and stations, many of whose foundations remain unto this day; raised the firm rampart of clay, which long defended the whole eastern coast of the Fen Country from submerison by the sea; and, doubtless, had they continued long enough in Britain to make it worth their while, would have left comparatively little for subsequent generations to do in its drainage and reclamation. However, there is no evidence to prove that the Romans attempted that work at all. Even the great bank is considered to have been rather intended to keep the Coritani in, than to keep the sea out. It is a fine sturdy piece of earthwork; and it is curious to mark, by its winding course, how little the outline of the sea-board has altered since Roman times. It has been somewhat prolific in Roman remains—weapons, vases, coins, &c.—and many of them are in the museum at Wisbeach, which is well worth a visit. Portions of the Roman roads or causeys across the Fen, yet remain practicable for traffic. They were constructed—as has been seen by cutting away the fen at their edge—by laying first the trunks of trees side by side on the peat, then on these a stratum of rough stone, and on that, clay and gravel alternately. The Great Northern Railway Company, after hopelessly endeavouring to get a foundation for their line between Whittlesea and Peterborough, by sinking tons of ballast and rubbish in the bog, were finally, it is said, compelled to adopt the same principle of construction.

The first written mention of the Fen District occurs in the old Saxon Chronicles and charters; the monks having been its first colonisers, and much of it being assigned by kings of Mercia to the religious foundations of Peterborough, Croyland, Ely, Ramsey, and others

for their support, more particularly in the articles of fish and fowl. The legends of the foundation of these slough-girt abbeys by the old hermits, in the hideous solitudes of the Fen, and the ghastly terrors that St Guthlake and other holy men faced in the execution of that godly work, are described in a very lively and quaint manner by the Saxon writers, and have been partly incorporated by Dugdale in his *History of Imbanking and Drayning*. From their accounts, the district, at 600 years after the evacuation of Britain by the Romans, was 'a hideous fen of a huge bigness, clouded with moist and dark vapours, having within it divers islands and woods, as also crooked and winding rivers.' The monks did little towards the drainage of the Fen, contenting themselves with colonising and cultivating the high lands, and constructing causeys across the morass\* from one religious house to another. As they had, however, carefully monopolised the habitable oases of the district, the lay population, who speedily followed in the wake of the church, were obliged to reclaim before they could inhabit. Works of defence against the water, and rude strokes of drainage, environing isolated estates and plots, began to checker the boggy wastes; so that, in the year 1256, a great improvement in the condition of parts of the Fens was perceptible.

But it soon became apparent that, without some comprehensive plan of action, these local improvements would be anything but a comprehensive blessing to the Fen District. The erection of banks in one place caused floods in another, and lawsuits for destruction of crops and stock followed. The cutting of drains, and leams, and lodes, was violently resented by the Fen peasantry—'a rude and almost barbarous sort of lazy and beggarly people'—on account of its spoiling the free fisheries and fowling where they lived, and checking the growth of the coarse grass and sedge which sprang up abundantly in the summer after the winter floodings, and served them for fodder, bedding, litter, and thatch for their huts; so that, even where the right thing was wished to be done and taken in hand, the chances of its being brought to a successful issue, or of its being suffered to effect the good it might be capable of, were very small.

But apart from their ignorance of what was primarily required for the proper drainage of an immense district like the Great Level—the variety of old vested interests secured by charters under the monks centuries back—the jealousy of the common people at any interference with the rights of fishery, and turbary, and free-warren, and a hundred other quaint privileges they enjoyed, and their lawless disposition, interposed greater difficulties than kings in those early days cared to encounter for a merely peaceful object. Thus it was that the reclamation of the Fens—a work, under the best circumstances, of great magnitude and difficulty—became, year by year, more encumbered with obstacles, just in the same proportion as it grew more imperatively necessary.

The district was traversed by six sluggish, slimy old rivers, which, unrestrained by embankments, and nearly on a level with their fenny margins, expanded at every bend into wide meres, and pulks, and swamps, keeping the surrounding low lands in a constantly moist and spongy state, and drowning them outright during the winter and wet season. This chronic inundation, it need scarcely be said, allowed of no agriculture or useful wild growth of any sort, save abundance of reeds and the coarse grass called 'lid,' which the summer solstice occasionally permitted to be made into hay. The Fen-rivers, moreover, were peculiarly liable to the tendency of all tidal rivers—to obstruction

\* The nature of the country at that time may be gathered from a curious record, in an old chronicle of Ely Cathedral in the British Museum, of the demise of Stancy Fen by the monks to one Escuen, 'for the rent of two thousand cels.'

\* This narrative is stated by the writer to be true in every particular.



at their outfalls. In every estuary, a large quantity of mud and sand is stirred up by the flood-tides, and borne like an invading force up the channel of the river. At the full, this burden of sediment is to a great extent deposited along the entire distance for which the tidal influence is felt. If the fresh-water has not, therefore, sufficient strength at the ebb to beat back the sea, and sweep away the tidal deposit, the outfall becomes in time utterly choked by shoals and sand-banks. The result is, that the inland suffers. The stream, dammed up, as it were, at its outlet, expands laterally, and overflows the country; not only doing incalculable and daily increasing harm in its normal state, but opening the way for a hundredfold multiplication of it at every flood from the uplands.

This was the wretched state of the rivers of the Level, by the choking of the common outfall at Wisbeach; a growing evil, to which, and to its consequences, the Fenmen were not blind, but were in seeming ignorance how to combat or avoid it. They attempted to avert from their own particular estates, as far as they could, by isolated exertions of banking and draining, the destruction with which the entire country was threatened; but they made no united effort, they took no common council for preservation from the impending ruin. The cure for the whole mischief would have been, to confine the entire waters of the rivers between embankments—straightening their course where practicable—and thus force to the outfall a volume and strength of fresh-water sufficient to scour away the shoals and mud-banks, and to keep the sea at its proper distance. Ignorance, or an injurious economy, however, fatally clogged the pluck of the unhappy Fenmen. The spirit of enterprise was fairly washed out of them. The sea, meeting daily less and less resistance, filled up the channel more hopelessly with shoals and sand-banks; at every tempest blowing up the barrier-banks of the Marshland, and devastating it with awful floods. In fact, the condition of the Fens, though detached oases of reclamation looked fair enough, was growing daily more alarming.

In 1630, under Charles I., may be said to have actually commenced the general drainage of the Fens. Some preliminaries were, however, effected in previous reigns, to which we should briefly advert. Mention has been already made of the interest taken in the drainage by the first monarchs of England, after William I. King James I., with a canny eye to the improvement of the crown-estates therein, upon his accession expressed a personal interest in the drainage of the Fens, and a determination to rescue them from the dominion of the water. By letters to the Commissioners of Sewers for the Isle of Ely, Cambridge, &c.—of whom Oliver Cromwell was one—he urged a design for the general drainage of all the district south of the river Welland. A bill was therefore drawn up for the sanction of parliament, under which the Commissioners, or Adventurers, or Undertakers, as they were called, were to drain the district (being 307,242 acres) in ten years, and to receive 112,000 acres of the land, chiefly common, as their recompense. There were other good provisions in the bill, which was a sound measure, and deserving of success; but the Fenmen, scared by the price which the improvements were to cost them, petitioned so clamorously against it in parliament, that it was lost. The subject began to attract public attention, and a host of pamphlets issued from the press, some taking the part of the Fenmen and their fancied grievances, some supporting the adventurers and the drainage. Turbulent suits at law were brought by divers perverse-spirited people against the commissioners and those they employed, who were also further held up to public animadversion by 'libellous songs.'

These expressions of popular prejudice put a stop for five years to all progress with the great work. The

state of the country, in the meantime, grew worse and worse. During the drought of summer, so choked were the rivers with shoals and sand, that there was not in many places sufficient water for navigation; while, in the wet months, 'the halting-horses of the barges, and the boys that drove them, were forced to go to their middles in mud and water,' and were frequently drowned in the sloughs and ditches that had to be passed. The green droves that in dry weather formed the Fen-roads were then impassable morasses; and the raised causeys alongside them, built for this emergency, were dilapidated and insecure. At certain times of winter, things were even worse; for 'when the ice is strong enough to hinder the passage of boats,' writes a contemporary witness, 'and yet not able to bear a man, the inhabitants upon the hards and the banks within the Fens, can have no help of food nor comfort for body or soul; no woman aid in her travail; no means to baptise a child, or partake of the communion; nor supply of any necessity, save what those poor desolate places do afford. And what expectation of health can there be to the bodies of men, where there is no one element good? the air being for the most part cloudy, gross, and full of rotten harrs; the water putrid and muddy, yea, full of loathsome vermin; the earth spongy and boggy, and the fire noisome by the stink of smoky hassocks.'

Such was the deplorable state of the Great Level of the Fens, when Francis, Earl of Bedford, the owner of 20,000 acres in the district, 'condescended' to undertake, with thirteen gentlemen participants or adventurers, under warrant of Charles I., subsequently confirmed by a charter of incorporation, the drainage of the Fens south of the river Welland. It was hence that the distinction of that portion of the Fens by the title of 'the Bedford Level' arose. Of the 310,000 acres it contained, the adventurers required 95,000 to defray the cost and maintenance of the drainage-works, and for their recompense—12,000 of these going as royalty to the king. In about three years, the corporation completed, at an expense of £100,000, the cutting of the Old Bedford River—a great straight canal between Earith and Denver Sluice, two points on a circumbendibus of the Ouse, 21 miles long and 70 feet wide, and a number of lesser drains and embankments; which for a time were considered to have effected the drainage of the Level. The succeeding winter, however, grievously undecieved the sanguine adventurers; and in the following April, the earl's undertaking was adjudged defective, and he to have failed in his contract, and but 40,000 of the 83,000 acres were assigned to him. Hereupon his majesty 'of blessed memory, taking this great business into his princely consideration,' became the undertaker himself; and appears to have entered on the work in very right earnest, laying it out on a large comprehensive plan, which included the building of an important central town at Manea, in the heart of the Level, and other projects equally great and useful. Unfortunately, he had barely commenced, when 'those fatal clouds'—as Dugdale calls them—began to arise, which presently eclipsed him altogether. The drainage then lay in abeyance for some years, until the Commonwealth being established, William, Earl of Bedford, son and heir of the first adventurer, now deceased, got the charter of the Bedford Level Corporation restored by Cromwell's parliament, and took the task in hand with other participants, repairing, like Solomon, the breaches in his father's works, and executing others of great magnitude and use. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, a Dutch drainage-engineer of note, was engaged to superintend the operations; and it was with him that the division of the Bedford Level into North, Middle, and South, mentioned in the former article, originated. Under his advice and direction, a second large cut, called the

New Bedford River, 100 feet wide, was made parallel with and close to the Old Bedford River, between the same points on the Ouse. This was banked only on its outer side, and the inner bank of the Old Bedford River levelled; so that the waters of both were prevented from flooding the surrounding Fen, but were free to overflow the strip of land enclosed between them. A reservoir, or 'wash,' for the pressure of sudden freshes—a kind of diluvial scapegoat—was thus formed, and doubtless saved the Middle Level many a drowning. This ingenious device of Vermuyden's was applied to other cases, and was good enough in its way; but had the outlets, the estuaries of the rivers, been attended to instead, as ought to have been the case, the construction of washes would have been unnecessary, the failure of his plans avoided, and much subsequent expense and loss saved to succeeding generations. However, on the 25th March 1653, the Bedford Level was adjudged to be drained, and the total 95,000 acres awarded to the undertakers.

Vermuyden's works answered for a time their imperfect purpose very well. They led the Fen-waters by a more direct course across the Level to a given point; but that point was short of the sea. Skilled engineer as he was, Vermuyden committed an irretrievable error in not attending to the outfalls. Moreover, owing to the more effectual drainage of the low-lying fens into the rivers, the spongy peat presently dried and shrunk down several feet; 'so that the relative levels of land and sea,' and even of ditch-bed and river-bed, 'became altered;' and the drains being unable to discharge their waters into the rivers as at first, stagnated, became choked, and flooded the country anew. The rivers, losing their access of drain-water, were unable, with the upland strength of stream alone, to grind out the gathering sands at their embouchures, and at high tides deluged the Fen and Marshland. Denver sluice, on the Ouse, where the Bedford rivers joined the old channel, was burst by a flood. Vermuyden's banks, made necessarily of soft materials, began to yield to the wear of the currents, and were further injured by the rats and swine. A spirit of despondency seemed to have seized the Fenmen, and they neglected to repair damages in the adventurers' works. In short, the Level was rapidly reverting to its old miserable condition, and the prospect of relief grew more remote than ever.

About this time, the system of 'poldering' and mill-drainage commenced. The Fenmen, despairing of a general 'exsiccation,' began to do the best they could, each man for himself. With this view, they raised embankments, or 'polders,' round their several properties, to protect them against floods; and endeavoured to dry the enclosures by erecting windmill-pumps, and water-wheels with dipping buckets, worked by sails, which lifted the water out and threw it over the embankments, with perfect indifference whether it went into a neighbour's property or a drain. After a good many quarrels and lawsuits had arisen out of this independent mode of action, the system became adopted in districts at the joint expense of several proprietors—a common drain being provided, and emptied into a river by a large windmill. Still, the outfalls of the rivers being overlooked, things grew no better, but rather worse. Disastrous floods broke the banks, levelled the polder-works, destroyed the mills, and involved crops, stock, and homestead in a common ruin. Vast tracts of land, once reclaimed, became again standing-pools, white with countless flocks of cranes, wild-geese, and herons, and margined with a dense jungle of reeds. 'Three years ago,' says a contemporary mourner, 'five quarters of corn an acre; now, sedge and rushes, frogs and bitterns.' Thousands of acres, once bright with ripening grain, lay beneath 'an uninterrupted and boundless extent of restless roaring waves.' The poorer inhabitants, reverting, not

without satisfaction, to their rude independence, waded over the marshes on stilts again in their high boots and leather-breeches; punted over the broad meres in summer, and skimmed them on swift skates in the frost; trapped wild-ducks in their decoys, and sent immense quantities of them to the neighbouring markets; netted the great pike and bream, or wandered with angling rod and gun by the sides of the lakes. A man kept a boat instead of a horse tethered to his door-post. The cattle, says one of that time, 'loosed out of their hovels, would swim across a river with nothing but their faces and horns above water, and then take footing at midrib-deep or less, but not one spot of dry land; and then forage till weary, and return to their hovels in the like swimming position.' In some parts, there were 'not two houses communicable for whole winters round, and sometimes scarcely in summer.' This state of things lasted through the eighteenth century.

But at this worst time help came. A tremendous deluge in the spring of 1808 damaged the Bedford Level 'to the amount of at least one million!' The country was at last aroused. Previously to this, Mr Rennie had been engaged in draining the Witham Fens in Lincolnshire under a special act of parliament, and had been very successful. He was now ordered to survey and report upon the best plan for the general drainage of the whole Level. This he did with great ability. He found that all the fens were higher than the sea at low-water mark, and were therefore perfectly capable of natural drainage. The scheme he proposed was grand and simple, and its efficiency could not be doubted: but the estimated expense of a million of money was a fatal objection to the Fenmen. However, the work he most insisted on—namely, a cut  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, from Eau-Brink to Lynn, across the last and most injurious bend of the Ouse next the sea, which had been urged during the last century by two engineers of great talent (the Kinderleys, father and son), and the act for it even obtained but never carried into execution—was commenced in 1818 by him and Charles Telford, and opened in 1821. Its effect was most beneficial. Subsequently, it was enlarged, the sills of the floodgates at Denver laid lower, and all the rivers of the Middle Level widened and deepened. And now, the right method being at last perceived, other improvements speedily followed. The waters of the river Welland were conducted by a similar straight channel into the Wash by Spalding; its old bed, and a great tract of green marshland and estuary sands, enclosed. The outfall of the river Nene, which had been partially improved in 1775, by a cut through the marshes  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile long, planned by Charles Kinderley, was especially noticed by Mr Rennie in his report, and an extension of the cut to low-water in the Wash recommended. But it was not until 1827, after great opposition in parliament, that the act was obtained, and the extension, 6 miles long, 300 feet wide between the tops of the banks, and 24 feet deep—a noble canal—commenced. It was completed under Mr Rennie—now Sir John—and Mr Fulton, at immense cost, but with more than proportionate benefit to the Level.

The North and Middle Levels may now be said to be effectually drained. Several important works have been executed within the last few years in the latter, under Messrs Walker & Co., the engineers, an interesting account of which has been published. In the South Level, though much has been done, there is yet room for improvement. The water still occasionally reasserts its power. In 1852, the Brandon River burst its banks near Littleport, and flooded 30,000 acres. But there is no procrastination now, no despair, no rude and stupid opposition to science, no violence to its executive. The farmers have seen their land increased tenfold in value—nay, even in some places



commanding as yearly rental the sum that was their purchase-money before the drainage; and that is mighty convincing logic to the agricultural mind. They know that the right system has been apprehended at last; and the taxes of the Bedford Level Corporation for construction or maintenance of works are paid, if not without grumbling, at least with resignation. Cultivation is daily claiming, acre by acre, rushy moor and new-dried pleck and plash; and the paring-plough cleaves across them a warm bed for the golden corn. Whittlesea, Ramsey, and Ugg Meres have long been steam-drained, and their once oozy beds are wheat-land and fat pasture. Wide marshes, laboratories of ague and fever, whose reedy shores once resounded to the clanking call of moorhens, and the garrulous chatter of coots, gulls, wild-duck, and all kinds of water-fowl, are now fair homesteads, and echo the tamer sounds of the farmyard and the stable. Clover and bending rye wave fragrantly over the site of broad lakes, the immemorial lairs of giant pike and stews of eels and frogs; and the rich scent of the bean-field is borne upon the June wind from many an acre, that once stank to heaven with burning hassocks and peat-stacks. The rivers now lead their waters from the uplands between high ramparts and by straight ways across the Level, whose *drainage*, gathered by innumerable capillaries into great arterial cuts, is lifted into them by steam-pumps here and there, or joins them as, by channels wide and deep—the work of man—they pour through the shallows of the Wash, driving the restless sand before them like dust-clouds before the chasing wind. The Fenman needs not his stilts upon the firm, level roads; his mere-punt has become a ferry-boat upon some new forty-foot or twenty-foot river; barns and cattle-sheds have taken the place of his decoys (save one or two); he gets good wages and fat bacon; and except a grip or two of rheumatism in the winter, lives as healthily as any of his class in England.

Neither is this all. Having beaten back his foe, the water, and remaining master of the field, the Fenman is carrying the war into the enemy's country, and taking spoil from him. Thousands of broad acres have been rescued within the last few years from the dominion of the Wash, and securely retained by barrier-banks. The old Roman sea-wall is now, on many parts of the coast, half a mile inland; and as the work of reclamation and enclosure goes on, we see in the bright present, and still brighter future that has dawned at last on the Great Level of the Fens, one more evidence of that Anglo-Saxon energy, which, once aroused, be the prick chivalry or gain, will be stayed by nothing in its right onward course, save the bounds which Almighty Wisdom has set to the enterprise of man.

#### THE PEACE-MAN AT PORTSMOUTH.

I AM a member of the Peace Society; I confess it at once. Perhaps I am un-English; perhaps I am pusillanimous; perhaps I am fanatical; perhaps I am disloyal; perhaps I am not. I am quite aware that I am unpopular; deeper than a member of the Jockey Club; more useless than one of the diplomatic corps; more despised than any of the late government. I know what you think of me; and because when I have said a disagreeable thing I like to repeat it, I say again, I am a member of the Peace Society.

I came down to Portsmouth instead of tarrying, as is my usual custom, at the Olive Branch, near Sandgate, for two reasons: first, because my periodical, *The White Flag*, informed me (falsely) that this was the cheaper market for sea-air; and, secondly, because I wished to give my son Joseph some idea, from actual observation, at any risk of harrowing details, of the horror and atrocity, and uncommercial character of war. He was an infant of sixteen when I brought him down here

three days ago, but he already seems immensely aged. We came down in the train from Dovesnest with a militia recruiting-sergeant, his cap ornamented with coloured ribbons, reminding me of the ensnaring Fly-catcher; a couple of sailors about to join their ship, the *Vindictive*; and a very respectable tailor, about four feet five inches high.

I saw the soldier's eye settle upon Joe like a basilisk's; he would have liked to have dragged that fine-grown youth into his net, and make him a child of Tophet like himself off-hand. I would allow my son no conversation with such a person, but permitted him to talk with the others, glancing at him occasionally over the sheets of *The White Flag*. Upon observing Joseph's cheek to be distended, and inquiring the cause, I found they had given him a nauseous weed to suck in token of amity; he was horribly sick, and hung his head out of the window during the remainder of the journey, protesting to the last that it was not the quid, but the circumstance of sitting with his back to the engine, that caused the misadventure. These people, except the tailor, recommended me with one voice to lodge upon 'the Hard,' at Portsmouth; so, upon inquiring where that was situated, when we arrived at the terminus I took the omnibus in the opposite direction: we arrived late in the evening upon Southsea Common.

I was awakened at the dawn of day by gun-fire—a hideous rolling noise, accompanied by flame and effluvia of sulphur; every morning, to paraphrase the words of a great destroyer of his species, 'I hear, I see, I smell it.' Sneering sounds, produced by brazen instruments, harassed me during breakfast-time. Involuntarily looking forth, I perceived hosts of men in invisible green—such as is manufactured in Kendal—taking advantage of every stock and stone, and levelling their muskets at the harmless passers-by; from these secure positions they fired, volley after volley, throughout the whole of the forenoon. The sharp unpleasant taste of gunpowder impregnated my bread and butter, as pepper flavours sandwiches. I did not permit Joseph to expose himself to danger by going forth, but confined him to the less hazard of flattening his nose against the Venetian blinds. When these marksmen at length withdrew, he ventured out; the roll of the drums from the barrack-yards at once broke harshly on my ears, and, column after column, I marked the organised brute forces of the state, or battalions of that corrupted class which is termed militia, sweep by us in savage pomp; strains of intoxicating and sensual music burst forth from the various bands, to drown their better feelings; educated men on horseback led them on, and exercised them in their fruitless duties. It was but too clear, by the perfection and regularity of their manoeuvres, that the independence and personal responsibility of each man had been shaken to their foundations: the ring of their muskets, as they grounded their arms; the hoarse words of despotic command; their monotonous tread, and the clash of their fixing bayonets, were appalling to the last degree. In beautiful relief to this maddening scene, small bands of convicts, in their modest garb, linked to the loaded wain, or draining the sluggish marsh, noiselessly executed their allotted tasks. This last reminded me of the Georgics, and I turned to Joseph for a quotation; to my great surprise, I observed him following a company of the Marine Artillery to Cumberland Fort; their quiet uniform, doubtless, excited the dear boy's disgust less vividly than the others' blood-red garments; his face was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with the fire of virtuous indignation.

On our way into the town, I pointed out to him the elaborate artifices by which it was defended; explained to him the amount of labour thrown away in the construction of the fosse and rampart, and the probable price of draw-bridges per dozen at the present rate of iron. Flags of the costliest material fluttered all

around us; the wary and unnecessary sentinel paced everywhere to and fro, or stood upright in his box for change. The streets were thronged with listless soldiery, or with sailors happier than they should have been. The little tailor of the day before, we recognised through his shop-window: it was bright with uniforms, and blazing with epaulets. On my way to the Hard, I was insulted by a mariner in drink, who inquired, with mock respect, whether 'that ere young kid of mine (meaning Joe) was going for a middy.' Passing through the dockyard-gate, I was interrogated by the official as to whether I—Elihu Goodwillcum—was a member of either of the Services. I proudly replied, that I was a member of the Peace Society; whereupon, with a malicious smile, he gave us into custody of a policeman, who never left us till we were out of the gates again.\* He shewed us, however, over all the premises, where there was much that was good and useful and interesting, were it not for the purposes to which such ingenuity was applied. After inspecting an excellent rope-warehouse, I was shocked by being carried into the Ambulance Depot—a machine invented to bear off the wounded from the battle-field. Moreover, in every dock and basin stood some enormous vessel—that might have been wafted to New South Wales with cotton, or to Caffreland with tracts—grinning with dreadful jaws like a fell dog of war. As my eyes roved over the vast harbour, they fell not upon a single trader; by the jetties were moored mighty three-deckers or two-deckers, taking in their final stores before joining the armada at Spithead. Here were embarking, in a splendid steam-ship—hired by government at twice the necessary cost—whole regiments for the Crimea; with thoughtless levity, and to a licentious tune, these soldiers left their fatherland, where the price of labour is greatly rising, so that they might have earned twice their present pay. There, again, were being lifted from the transport some wounded warriors from Sebastopol, sick, in pain, and dying. This was the sad lesson I wanted Joe to learn, and we accompanied them on their way to hospital. I gave a sovereign to the local fund—which it was not good principle to do, and I don't wish to have it known—and waited outside the gates an hour while Joe went in.

'Well, my boy, what do they say?' said I, as he came out. 'They're glad enough to come back again, eh? Ain't likely again to be caught with recruiting-chaff, I suppose?'

'They were very glad to be back again, they said, father,' he replied; 'they think they shall be able to get well faster here, and be sooner ready to go out to join their comrades.'

'Now, Joe,' said I, 'you ain't such a precious fool as to believe that, are you?'

'I do believe it, father,' said he.

So I changed the conversation at once, and took him to the Gun-wharf. This enormous space was paved with engines of destruction: in one spot, thousands of cannon from the various ships in dock or harbour were arranged with symmetrical exactness; in another, howitzers of enormous calibre, Lancasters of prodigious range, were lying about like mammoth creatures of another creation—man's and the devil's; in a third, were piled myriads of shot and shell: a single one of many of these last Joe and myself together were not able to lift from the ground, and which, falling upon us from a foot high, would have ground us to powder. Fancy, then, their stomachs filled with iron (force-meat) balls, and the whole mass propelled at a hundred miles an hour from the mortar's mouth, lighting upon a tea-party—a Peace tea-party—in Sebastopol, and bursting as it fell!

\* We must here remark, that Mr Goodwillcum only submitted, as every other civilian must, to official guidance: it was not that, as a member of the Peace Society, he was singled out for insult.—Ed.

Bunches of painted grape, of a vintage peculiar to this country, were stored in well-kept outhouses; bullets of all shapes—round, triangular, and pyramidal—were carefully arranged on lockers. Far more interesting to me than these, were the rusted cannon and broken gun-carriages, swung up by dozens in all times from sunken ships; never more to be used in destruction, but remaining as trophies of scientific skill. Together with these, alas! were mighty guns that breathed forth death not three months back; despite their massive strength, all shattered at the mouths or shoulders by our cannon-shot—the spoils of Bomarsund! The Armoury—whatever stabs my heart might suffer, I was determined Joe should see it all—the storehouse of small-arms, was a dreadful sight; 20,000 stand of arms, ready for instant service, stood upon wooden racks; thousands of pistols, sabres, and lances bedecked the lofty walls; the forget-me-not, and other emblems of Peace, were positively displayed, over the several departments, in bayonets and Colt's revolvers; musketoons of the reign of Queen Anne, firelocks of the Low Countries, German small-arms of the seventeenth century, Burmah pikes, Otaheitan javelins, and Minié-rifles of the latest bore; all had their allotted place. I seemed to read, inscribed in dreadful characters, a melancholy history of the foul passions of mankind in every clime and age of the universe.

Besides that, the uprising and down-setting of the sun itself are notified by the discharge of cannon upon land and sea: there is not an hour in the day here free from the like waste in practice, signals, or salutes. I am credibly informed, that the small field-piece cannot be fired even with damaged powder at less than 1s. 4d., not taking into account the cost of the fusée and the wear and tear. These horrible sights and sounds of warfare, and the contemplation of such hideous extravagance, had determined me to leave Portsmouth for the back of the Isle of Wight. There, said I, with my face to the boundless ocean, and my rear to Spithead, I shall forget these mad excitements, and peruse *The White Flag* in tranquillity. I confess, too, that my disgust at our military establishments was wearing off almost insensibly, and I perceived with a shudder that Joseph regarded them already with some liking; I set sail, therefore, yesterday noon. Now, what should the ordinary packet that plies to and fro from Ryde do on that identical day, but take us right away from her course amongst the anchored fleet; now approaching the shining sides of the *Duke of Wellington*, that monstrous floating-battery, with tier on tier of heavy-metalled guns, and more than a thousand armed men; and now loitering by the speedy *Driver*, that sword-fish of the deep, to scan her perfected equipment and trained ferocity. One vessel—it was explained to us with cruel detail—was the fastest paddle war-steamer; another was the speediest screw; a third, the newest of the gun-boats, with an unprecedented weight of metal. The screw-ships to eastward formed the Flying Squadron, to sail that very day as van-guard of the Baltic Fleet, which our steamer—the steamer of Elihu Goodwillcum—was chartered to accompany to the Nab! Yes, I had been unwittingly in an excursion-ship—at five shillings a head—to see these seven monsters of the deep start on their bloody errand. I would not have had it told at Manchester for five hundred pounds.

I was startled from these reflections by the combined discharge of a hundred cannon, all pointed, as I believe, at our unhappy vessel. Perfect darkness, deafness, and a bitter taste in my mouth, succeeded. When I opened my eyes again, the smoke had rolled away; but although the sight was really beautiful, I thought it right to reshut them, putting only such questions to my son Joseph as I thought consistent with my principles. He, therefore, shall describe the circumstances in his own words.

'The Queen is coming—the Queen, father! They are manning yards; up the men go in hundreds, just like squirrels, to the tops; they cling from rope and spar, as spiders cling, and all the rigging swarms with them, and one has climbed upon each mast to the very top of all.' (I looked through my fingers here, and it was certainly a wondrous sight; they seemed to hang 'twixt heaven and earth on nothing; and, like monkeys in a child's toy, a man was leaning on each masthead.) 'Look at the *Fairy*, father, the Queen's beautiful steam-yacht—look; with delicate apricot funnel, and raking'—(Where could the young dog have learned that ribaldry?)—'and raking snow-white masts! How charmingly she threads the maze of the great ships; and hear, father, hear the cheers that come booming on the wind.' (And surely there was a faint and far-off music, inexpressibly pleasant, swelling ever louder over the purple sea.) 'I see the little glass-house at the stern now; but she is not sitting there, for a brilliant crowd is standing on the deck, and the men are without hats. That is she—that is she in the plain brown dress and the straw-bonnet. Cheer, father, cheer—hurrah!' And in the excitement of the moment, and quite forgetting the purpose of her coming, I believe I cheered as lustily as any. Having once done so, I thought I might as well go on with it; and, upon my life, I have not got my voice back yet. Moreover, I blushed slightly, and looked on to the end. Each of the seven great ships then weighed its anchors, and stood slowly out to sea; and on board of each a band was playing, and every tongue gave chorus to their grand 'God Save the Queen.' Particularly I noticed a great troop-ship filled with men for the Crimea, every inch of her deck crowded with brown great-coats and forage-caps, and all her crew above them on the rigging. As the *Fairy* passed, a great shout burst forth, as though from a single throat, and held on and continued for minutes, as long as she was within hearing. None of the squadron's sails were spread, for the wind was dead against them; and only by the smoke between their masts, and by the white waves that boiled about their sterns, could the power be told by which they were propelled. Like sea-birds in a long broken line, they sailed with the little *Fairy* and their Queen; so we went out past the *Warner*, and nearly to the Nab, and then up went the signals from the yacht: 'Success—Farewell!' Again, as she passed each vessel, did the cheers break forth afresh, and always was her slight form bent to acknowledge them, and ever did the Prince beside her bare his head. When we reached Portsmouth harbour, the flown Flying Squadron formed a mere speck on the horizon's verge. It seemed too late that night to reach the island, and we are at Portsmouth still.

#### CURIOSITIES OF CHINA.

Anything relating to China, in the way of curious or authentic information, is likely to have a measure of interest for the generality of English readers. To say nothing of our present political and commercial connections with that country, its customs and most ordinary characteristics are so peculiar, and in such striking contrast with the forms of Western civilisation, that they can hardly be contemplated, even in description, without affording us much both of instruction and entertainment. China is as yet but very imperfectly known to Europeans; and, indeed, a great deal of what has hitherto passed for knowledge can now be shewn to be a flagrant misconception. Few persons at any time have had opportunities of really seeing either the country or the people; the vague, purblind glimpses obtained of them from the wharfs and outskirts of Canton being, in fact, as little entitled to be considered representative of the varied social aspects of the empire as Wapping or Rotherhithe are to be

taken as average specimens of town and country in the general United Kingdom. Thus, when we hear that the Chinese prepare dishes with castor-oil, and that some of their favourite dainties are fish-gizzards, peacocks' combs, and other similar delicacies, we must not accept the statement with an 'over-ready credulity, as it is certain that no such dishes have ever been met with by any one who had made acquaintance with Chinese cookery elsewhere than in the neighbourhood of the English factories at Canton; and that, even if they were ever met with there, the likelihood is that some of the Canton merchants had invented them expressly for the purpose of quizzing novices from Europe, who were more credulous than discriminating. All the vulgar errors of this description, as well as many others equally unfounded and more important, have been recently corrected by an ingenious and accomplished Frenchman, whose lately published work on the Chinese Empire\* is in the highest degree valuable and interesting. M. Hue, the author, spent no less than fourteen years of his life in various parts of China as a Roman Catholic missionary, and after passing some time in Taty and Tibet—of which countries he formerly favoured us with an intelligent account—he returned to the Celestial Empire, and was conducted across the country under the immediate protection of the emperor—travelling in all the pomp of a high government functionary, attended by mandarins and a military escort, from the frontiers of Tibet to the city of Canton. During this journey, he was brought into constant and intimate relation with persons of the highest rank in the country; and having previously, while labouring in his vocation, been in habits of familiar intercourse with the poor, he enjoyed the opportunity of seeing and observing all the different phases and conditions of the social and domestic life of the Chinese people, and is able to report of the general character and peculiarities of their curious civilisation. The information he gives us concerning the institutions, religion, manners, and customs of this extraordinary country, have not been taken on hearsay from the accounts of others, but are gathered from his personal experience and observation; and his manner of communicating his knowledge is perhaps the pleasantest conceivable, there being nothing in the shape of formal dissertation, but everything of which he takes occasion to inform us being presented in the way of agreeable digression, at suitable intervals of the narrative of his journey, without materially interrupting its interest or connection. There are, doubtless, some incidents in his adventures which seem very strange to persons unacquainted with China; but the high character of the writer is so much above suspicion, and throughout the work he appears so earnest and straightforward, that whilst reading his most singular and unexpected revelations, we meet with nothing to raise a doubt of their substantial truth.

There is one characteristic of his book, which of itself is calculated to give us a favourable impression of its general reliability. Though an indefatigable apostle in the missionary enterprise, and as such no doubt desirous of giving the best possible account of his ministry, M. Hue confesses that Christianity in China has not been very successful. This he ascribes to the materialistic tendencies of the people, and to their total indifference to all religious considerations. His statement of the difficulties that attend the gaining over converts to the Christian faith, is pleasantly illustrated by a conversation he reports as having on one occasion taken place between himself and an intelligent individual of the literary order, who was professedly disposed to consider the matter favourably. 'In one

\* *The Chinese Empire*. By M. Hue, formerly Missionary Apostolic in China. 3 vols. Longman, London. 1855.



of the principal towns of China,' says he, 'we were for some time in communication with a lettered Chinese, who appeared extremely well disposed to embrace Christianity. We had several conferences together, and we studied carefully the most important and difficult points of doctrine; and, finally, by way of complement to our oral instruction, we read some of the best books. Our dear catechumen admitted, without any exception, everything we advanced; the only difficulty was, he said, the learning by heart the prayers that every good Christian ought to know, in order to say them morning and evening. As he seemed, nevertheless, to desire putting off to some indefinite period the moment in which he should declare himself a Christian, every time he came to see us we urged him to do so, and made the most earnest representation of the duty of following the truth, now that he knew where it lay. "By and by," said he; "all in good time. One should never be precipitate." One day, however, he spoke out a little more. "Come," said he, "let us speak to-day only words conformable to reason. It is not good to be too enthusiastic. No doubt, the Christian religion is beautiful and sublime; its doctrine explains, with method and clearness, all that is necessary for man to know. Whoever has any sense must see that, and will adopt it in his heart in all sincerity; but, after all, one must not think too much of these things, and increase the cares of life. Now, just consider—we have a body; how many cares it demands! It must be clothed, fed, and sheltered from the injuries of the weather; its infirmities are great, and its maladies numerous. It is agreed on all hands, that health is our most precious good. This body that we see, that we touch, must be taken care of every day, and every moment of the day. Now, is not this enough, without troubling ourselves about a soul that we never do see? The life of man is short, and full of misery; it is made up of a succession of important concerns, that follow one another without interruption. Our hearts and our minds are scarcely sufficient for the solitudes of the present life: is it wise, then, to torment one's self about the future one?"'

Our good missionary could only urge, that inasmuch as men's bodies are frail and perishable, it seemed conformable to reason that they should concern themselves about their souls, which are immortal; that the present life being a tissue of cares and dark anxieties, it was all the more rational to think of and prepare for that future life which will have no end. But he failed to convince the learned doctor of the possibility of providing for 'two lives at the same time'; and though he admits that the latter was really a worthy fellow enough, he was yet so thoroughly Chinese, as to be quite incapable of appreciating the doctrines of Christianity.

The Flowery People would seem, indeed, to be extremely unsusceptible of new ideas in relation to religion, even though they have for the most part ceased to attach any significance to the dogmas and practices of their national faith. They are observers of forms and ceremonies, with as little belief in their efficacy as some of our most enlightened Europeans. As an instance, let us quote a passage descriptive of the method whereby the Chinese seek to obtain rain in times of drought: 'When these droughts are prolonged, and occasion any fears for the harvest, it is customary for the mandarin of the district to make a proclamation, prescribing the most rigorous abstinence. Neither fermented liquors, meat of any kind, fish, eggs, nor animal food of any description, is allowable; nothing is to be eaten but vegetables. Every housekeeper has to fasten over his door strips of yellow paper, on which are printed some formulas of invocation, and the image of the Dragon of Rain. If Heaven is deaf to this kind of supplication, collections are made, and scaffolds erected, for the performance of superstitious dramas;

and, as a last resource, they organise a burlesque and extravagant procession, in which an immense dragon, made of wood or paper, is carried about to the sound of infernal music. Sometimes it happens that, do what they will, the dragon is obstinate, and will not give rain, and then the prayers are changed into curses: he who was before surrounded with honours is insulted, reviled, and torn to pieces by his rebellious worshippers. It is related that under Kia-King, fifth emperor of the Manchoo-Tatar dynasty, a long drought had desolated several provinces of the north; but as, notwithstanding numerous processions, the dragon persisted in not sending rain, the indignant emperor launched against him a thundering edict, and condemned him to perpetual exile on the borders of the river Ili, in the province of Torgot. The sentence was about to be executed, and the criminal was proceeding with touching resignation to cross the deserts of Tatar, and undergo his punishment on the frontiers of Turkestan, when the supreme courts of Peking, touched with compassion, went in a body to throw themselves at the feet of the emperor, and ask pardon for the poor fiend. His imperial majesty then deigned to revoke the sentence, and a courier was sent off at full gallop to carry the news to the executors of the imperial decree. The dragon was reinstated in his functions, but only on condition that in future he would acquit himself of them a little better. Do the Chinese of our days, it will be asked, really put faith in such monstrous practices? Not the least in the world. All this is merely an external and completely lying demonstration. The inhabitants of the Celestial Empire observe these ancient superstitions without at all believing in them. What was done in times past, they continue to do in the present day, but solely because their ancestors did so; and what their ancestors have established, they are always unwilling to change.'

It will thus be seen that the Chinese are as expert in the art of shamming as people known to us nearer home, who perhaps are not so much entitled to excuse. A similar disingenuousness pervades their habits of etiquette and politeness, abundant illustrations of which are presented in these volumes. Take as a sufficient sample the following description of a hospitable man:—'During the time when we were at our northern mission, we were witnesses of a most curious fact, which was wonderfully characteristic of the Chinese. It was one of our festival-days, and we were to celebrate the holy office at the house of the first catechist, where there was a tolerably large chapel, to which the Christians of the neighbouring villages were in the habit of coming in great numbers. After the ceremony, the master of the house posted himself in the middle of the court, and began to call to the Christians who were leaving the chapel: "Don't let anybody go away; to-day, I invite every one to eat rice in my house." And then he ran from one group to another, urging them to stay; but every one alleged some reason or other for going, and went. The courteous host appeared quite distressed; at last he spied a cousin of his, who had almost reached the door, and rushed towards him, saying: "What, cousin! are you going too? Impossible! this is a holiday, and you really must stop." "No," said the other; "do not press me, I have business at home that I must attend to." "Business! what, to-day—a day of rest! Absolutely you shall stop; I won't let you go." And he seized the cousin's robe, and tried to bring him back by main force, while the desired guest struggled as well as he could, and sought to prove that his business was too pressing to allow of his remaining. "Well," said the host at last, "since you positively cannot stay to eat rice, we must at least drink a few glasses of wine together. I should be quite ashamed if my cousin went away from my house without taking anything." "Well," replied the cousin, "it don't take much to drink a glass of wine;"

and he turned back. They re-entered the house, and sat down in the company-room. The master then called in a loud voice, though without appearing to address any one in particular: "Heat some wine, and fry two eggs."

"In the meantime, till the hot wine and fried eggs should arrive, the two lighted their pipes, and began to gossip; and then they lit and smoked again, but the wine and eggs did not make their appearance. The cousin, who most likely really had some business, at last ventured to inquire of his hospitable entertainer how long he thought it would be before the wine was ready. "Wine!" replied the host—"wine! Have we got any wine here? Don't you know very well that I never drink wine? It hurts my stomach." "In that case," said the cousin, "surely you might have let me go. Why did you press me to stay?" Hereupon the master of the mansion rose, and assumed an attitude of lofty indignation. "Upon my word," said he, "anybody might know what country you come from! What! I have the politeness to invite you to drink wine, and you have not even the politeness to refuse! Where, in the world, have you learned your rites? Among the Mongols, I should think." And the poor cousin, understanding that he had been guilty of a terrible solecism, stammered some words of apology, and, filling his pipe once more, departed. We were ourselves present at this delightful little scene; and as soon as the cousin was gone, the least we could do was to have a good laugh; but the master of the house did not laugh, he was indignant. He asked us whether we had ever seen such an ignorant, stupid, absurd man as his cousin; and he returned always to his grand principle—that is to say, that a well-bred man will always render politeness for politeness; and that one ought kindly to refuse what another kindly offers; "Otherwise," he cried, "what would become of us?"

Our traveller was for some days laid up with a serious illness at Kuen-kiang-hien, in the province of Houpe, and on his recovery, was politely shewn the handsome coffin which the authorities had prepared for him in the event of his decease. The reader will most likely be surprised to learn, that a provision of this sort is an actual Chinese compliment! Let him read, and admit for once that there is a novelty under the sun.

"In no other country than China, perhaps, could men be heard exchanging compliments on the subject of a coffin. People are mostly shy of mentioning the lugubrious objects destined to contain the mortal remains of a relation or friend; and when death does enter the house, the coffin is got in in secrecy and silence, in order to spare the feelings of the mourning family. But it is quite otherwise in China; there, a coffin is simply an article of the first necessity to the dead, and of luxury and fancy to the living. In the great towns you see them displayed in the shops, with all sorts of tasteful decorations, painted and varnished, and polished and trimmed up to attract the eyes of passengers, and give them the fancy to buy themselves one. People in easy circumstances, who have money to spare for their pleasures, scarcely ever fail to provide themselves beforehand with a coffin to their own taste, and which they consider becoming; and until the moment arrives for lying down in it, it is kept in the house, not as an article of immediate necessity, but as one that cannot fail to be consoling and pleasant to the eye in a nicely furnished apartment.

For well-brought-up children, it is a favourable method of expressing the fervour of their filial piety towards the authors of their being—a sweet and tender consolation for the heart of a son, to be able to purchase a beautiful coffin for an aged father or mother, and come in state to present the gift at the moment when they least expect such an agreeable surprise. If one is not sufficiently favoured by fortune to be able to afford

the purchase of a coffin in advance, care is always taken that before "saluting the world," as the Chinese say, a sick person shall at least have the satisfaction of casting a glance at his last abode; and if he is surrounded by at all affectionate relations, they never fail to buy him a coffin, and place it by the side of his bed.

"In the country, this is not always so easy, for coffins are not kept quite ready, and, besides, peasants have not such luxurious habits as towns-people. The only way, then, is to send for the carpenter of the place, who takes measure of the sick person, not forgetting to observe to him that it must be made a little longer than would seem necessary, because one always stretches out a little when one's dead. A bargain is then made concerning the length and the breadth, and especially the cost; wood is brought, and the workmen set about their task in the yard close to the chamber of the dying person, who is entertained with the music of the saw and the other tools while death is at work within him, preparing him to occupy the snug abode when it is ready.

"All this is done with the most perfect coolness, and without the slightest emotion, real or affected. We have ourselves witnessed such scenes more than once, and it has always been one of the things that most surprised us in the manners of this extraordinary country. A short time after our arrival at the mission in the north, we were walking one day in the country with a Chinese seminarist, who had the patience to reply to all our long and tedious questions about the men and things of the Celestial Empire. Whilst we were keeping up the dialogue as well as we could in a mixture of Latin and Chinese, using a word of one or the other as we found occasion, we saw coming towards us a rather numerous crowd, who advanced in an orderly manner along a narrow path. It might have been called a procession. Our first impulse was to turn aside, and get into some safe corner behind a large hill; for not having as yet much experience in the manners and customs of the Chinese, we had some hesitation in producing ourselves, for fear of being recognised and thrown into prison—possibly, even condemned and strangled. Our seminarist, however, reassured us, and declared that we might continue our walk without any fear. The crowd had now come up with us, and we stood aside to let it pass. It was composed of a great number of villagers, who looked at us with smiling faces, and had the appearance of being uncommonly pleased. After them came a litter, on which was borne an empty coffin, and then another litter, upon which lay extended a dying man wrapped in blankets. His face was haggard and livid, and his expiring eyes were fixed upon the coffin that preceded him. When every one had passed, we hastened to ask the meaning of this strange procession. "It is some sick man," said the seminarist, "who has been taken ill in a neighbouring village, and whom they are bringing home to his family. The Chinese do not like to die away from their own house." "That is very natural; but what is the coffin for?" "For the sick man, who probably has not many days to live. They seem to have made everything ready for his funeral. I remarked by the side of the coffin a piece of white linen, that they mean to use for the mourning."

"These words threw us into the most profound astonishment, and we saw then that we had come into a new world—into the midst of a people whose ideas and feelings differed widely from those of Europeans. These men quietly setting about to prepare for the funeral of a still living friend and relation; this coffin placed purposely under the eyes of a dying man, doubtless with the purpose of doing what was agreeable to him: all this plunged us into a strange reverie, and the walk was continued in silence."

Here we have certainly an instance of unexampled eccentricity; and many others might be quoted from

these volumes which are nearly as extraordinary. The next quotation, which must be our last, may serve to illustrate the state of the mechanical arts in China as regards the regulation and measurement of time. Few Englishmen, who have never visited the country, are likely to have heard before of a cat being turned to account as a household clock—which seems, however, to be the case in China. 'One day,' says our author, 'when we went to pay a visit to some families of Chinese Christian peasants, we met, near a farm, a young lad who was taking a buffalo to graze along our path. We asked him carelessly, as we passed, whether it was yet noon. The child raised his head to look at the sun, but it was hidden behind thick clouds, and he could read no answer there. "The sky is so cloudy," said he, "but wait a moment;" and with these words he ran towards the farm, and came back a few minutes afterwards with a cat in his arms. "Look here," said he, "it is not noon yet;" and he shewed us the cat's eyes, by pushing up the lids with his hands. We looked at the child with surprise, but he was evidently in earnest: and the cat, though astonished, and not much pleased at the experiment made on her eyes, behaved with the most exemplary complaisance. "Very well," said we, "thank you;" and he then let go the cat, which made her escape pretty quickly, and we continued our route. To say the truth, we had not at all understood the proceeding; but we did not wish to question the little pagan, lest he should find out that we were Europeans by our ignorance. As soon as ever we reached the farm, however, we made haste to ask our Christians whether they could tell the clock by looking into a cat's eyes. They seemed surprised at the question; but as there was no danger in confessing to them our ignorance of the properties of the cat's eyes, we related what had just taken place. That was all that was necessary; our complaisant neophytes immediately gave chase to all the cats in the neighbourhood. They brought us three or four, and explained in what manner they might be made use of for watches. They pointed out that the pupil of their eyes went on constantly growing narrower until twelve o'clock, when they became like a fine line, as thin as a hair, drawn perpendicularly across the eye; and that after twelve, the dilatation recommenced. When we had attentively examined the eyes of all the cats at our disposal, we concluded that it was past noon, as all the eyes perfectly agreed upon the point. We have had some hesitation in speaking of this Chinese discovery, as it may doubtless tend to injure the interests of the clock-making trade, and interfere with the sale of watches; but all considerations must give way to the spirit of progress. All important discoveries tend, in the first instance, to injure private interests; and we hope, nevertheless, that watches will continue to be made, because, among the number of persons who may wish to know the hour, there will most likely be some who will not give themselves the trouble to run after the cat, or who may fear some danger to their own eyes from too close an examination of hers.'

We have not attempted to give any outline of M. Huc's narrative, nor any analysis of the mass of interesting and curious information he has accumulated respecting the history, institutions, and present social circumstances of the empire, since, in our necessarily contracted space, we could not possibly convey any complete idea of the extent and value of his researches. Those who wish to learn how China is governed, what is the extent of its industrial resources, how education is provided for, and in what degree literature is honoured and rewarded; how the people in town and country live, act, and amuse themselves; and what, upon the whole, in regard to innumerable other matters the writer has learned, and can report from his observation and

experience during his fourteen years' residence, must be referred to the book itself, which we can confidently commend for the fulness and clearness of its information, and the easy grace and sprightliness of its composition. Among books of travel, there are few known to us that can be considered equal to the present one in point of literary merit. Picturesque and animated in style, and abounding with pleasantry and a genial vein of humour, the work is one of quite singular attractions; and it has the further and more significant advantage, of being the highest authority on the subject that is now to be found in Europe.

#### FLAWS IN DIAMONDS.

It is sometimes instructive, and at all times interesting, to learn something of the eccentricities, failings, and foibles of remarkable persons. Such traits form the most attractive and salient points of biographical works; they may be called the colouring of literary portraiture, and, being endowed with an individual vitality, are found to linger longest in the memory of the general reader.

Having gathered together a number of these personal anecdotes, we propose to pass away a gossiping, and not wholly an unprofitable, half hour in relating them to our readers.

It is painful to reflect upon the inordinate vanity which characterises many illustrious lives. When Cæsar became bald, he constantly wore the laurel-wreath with which we see him represented on medals, in the hope of concealing the defect; and Cicero's egotism was so great, that he even composed a Latin hexameter in his own praise:

Oh fortunatam natam me Consule Roman.

(Oh fortunate Rome when I was born her consul?)—

a line which elicited the just sarcasms of Juvenal. Queen Elizabeth left 3000 different dresses in her wardrobe when she died; and during many years of the latter part of her life, would not suffer a looking-glass in her presence, for fear that she should perceive the ravages of time upon her countenance. Mæcenas, the most egregious of classic exquisites, is said to have 'wielded the Roman Empire with rings on his fingers.' The vanity of Benvenuto Cellini is too well known to need repetition. Sir Walter Raleigh was, perhaps, the greatest beau on record. His shoes, on court-days, were so gorgeously adorned with precious stones, as to have exceeded 6000 guineas in value; and he had a suit of armour of solid silver, with jewelled sword and belt, the worth of which was almost incalculable. The great Descartes was very particular about his wigs, and always kept four in his dressing-closet; a piece of vanity wherein he was imitated by Sir Richard Steele, who never expended less than forty guineas upon one of his large black periwigs. Mozart, whose light hair was of a fine quality, wore it very long and flowing down between his shoulders, with a tie of coloured ribbon confining it at the neck. Poor Goldsmith's innocent dandyisms, and the story of his peach-blossom coat, are almost proverbial. Pope's self-love was so great, that, according to Johnson, he 'had been flattered till he thought himself one of the moving powers in the system of life.' Allan Ramsay's egotism was excessive. On one occasion, he modestly took precedence of Peter the Great, in estimating their comparative importance with the public: 'But haud [hold], proud czar,' he says, 'I wadna niffer [exchange] fame!' Napoleon was vain of his small foot. Salvatore Rosa was once heard to compare himself with Raphael and Michael Angelo, calling the former dry, and the latter coarse; and Raphael, again, was jealous of the fame and skill of Michael Angelo. Hogarth's historical paintings—which were bad—equalled, in his own opinion, those of the old masters. Sir Peter Lely's vanity was so well



known, that a mischievous wit, resolving to try what amount of flattery he would believe, told him one day that if the Author of Mankind could have had the benefit of his (Lely's) opinions upon beauty, we should all have been materially benefited in point of personal appearance; to which the painter emphatically replied: 'Fore Gott, sare, I believe you're right!' Bojardo, the Italian poet, ascribed so high an importance to his poetry, that when he had invented a suitable name for one of his heroes, he set the bells ringing in the village. Kotzebue was so vain and envious, that he could endure nothing celebrated to be near him, though it were but a picture or a statue; and even Lamartine, the loftiest and finest of French poets, robs his charming pages of half their beauty by the inordinate self-praise of his commentaries. Rousseau has been called 'the self-torturing egotist;' and Lord Byron's life was one long piece of egotism from beginning to end. He was vain of his genius, his rank, his misanthropy, and even of his vices; and he was particularly proud of his good riding and his handsome hands.

Penuriousness, unhappily, has been too commonly associated with learning and fame. Cato, the censor, on his return from Spain, was so parsimonious that he sold his field-horse, to save the expense of conveying the animal by sea to Italy. Attilius Regulus, at the period of his greatest glory in Africa, entreated permission to return home to the management of his estate, which consisted but of seven acres, alleging that his servants had been defrauding him of certain agricultural implements, and that he was anxious to look after his affairs. Lord Bacon is a melancholy instance of the dominion obtained by avarice over a great mind. Among artists, Nollekens and Northcote were proverbially penurious. Swift, in his old age, was avaricious, and had an absolute terror of visitors. 'When his friends of either sex came to him, in expectation of a dinner, his custom was to give every one a shilling, that they might please themselves with their provision.' Of the great Duke of Marlborough, it is said by Macaulay, that 'his splendid qualities were mingled with alloy of the most sordid kind.'

We will now turn to the errors of self-indulgence. Socrates, Plato, Agathon, Aristophanes, and others of the most celebrated Greeks, drank wine to a surprising extent; and Plato says, in his *Symposium*, that Socrates kept sober longer than any. Tiberius was so much addicted to this vice, that he had frequently to be carried from the senate-house. Cato was fond of the bottle. Ben Jonson delighted in copious draughts of Canary wine, and even contrived to have a pipe of that liquor added to his yearly pension as poet-laureate. The fine intellect of Coleridge was clouded over by this unhappy propensity. Montaigne indulged in sherry. The otherwise unexceptionable morality of Addison was stained by this one error. Sir Richard Steele, Fielding, and Sterne shared the prevailing taste for hard drinking. Mozart was no exception to the rule. Churchill was a very intemperate man; and Hogarth gave a ludicrous immortality to the satirist's love of porter, by representing him in the character of a bear with a mug of that liquor in its paw. Tasso aggravated his mental irritability by the use of wines, despite the entreaties of his physicians. During his long imprisonment, he speaks gratefully in his letters of some sweetmeats with which he had been supplied; and after his release, he relates with delight the good things that were provided for him by his patron, the Duke of Mantua—'the bread and fruit, the fish and flesh, the wines, sharp and brisk, and the confections.' Pope, who was somewhat of an epicure, when staying at the house of his friend Lord Bolingbroke, would lie in bed for days together, unless he heard there were to be stewed lampreys for dinner, when he would forthwith arise, and make his

appearance at table. Dr Johnson had a voracious liking for a leg of mutton. 'At my Aunt Ford's,' he said, 'I ate so much of a leg of mutton, that she used to talk of it.' A gentleman once treated him to a dish of new honey and clouted cream, of which he partook so enormously, that his entertainer was alarmed.

Quin, the famous actor, has been known to travel from London to Bath, for the mere sake of dining upon a John Dory. Dr Parr, in a private letter, confesses to his passionate love of hot boiled lobsters, with a profusion of shrimp-sauce. Shelley was for many years a vegetarian; and in the notes to his earliest edition of *Queen Mab*, speaks with enthusiasm of a dinner of 'greens, potatoes, and turnips.' Ariosto was excessively fond of turnips. He ate fast, and of whatever was nearest to him, often beginning with the bread upon the table before the other dishes came. Being visited one day by a stranger, he devoured all the dinner that was provided for both; and when afterwards censured for his unpoliteness, only observed that 'the gentleman should have taken care of himself.' Handel ate enormously; and Dr Kitchener relates of him, that whenever he dined at a tavern, he ordered dinner for three. On being told that all was ready as soon as the company should arrive, he would exclaim: 'Den bring up de dinner *prestissimo*—I AM DE GOMBANY!' Lord Byron's favourite dish was eggs and bacon; and though he could never eat it without suffering from an attack of indigestion, he had not always sufficient firmness to resist the temptation. Lalande, the great French astronomer, would eat spiders as a relish. Linnaeus delighted in chocolate; and it was he who bestowed upon it its generic name of *Theobroma*, or 'food of the gods.' Fontenelle deemed strawberries the most delicious eating in the world; and during his last illness, used to exclaim constantly: 'If I can but reach the season of strawberries!'

The amusements of remarkable persons have been various, and often eccentric. The great Bayle would frequently wrap himself in his cloak, and hasten to places where mountebanks resorted; and this was his chief relaxation from the intensity of study. Spinoza delighted to set spiders fighting, and would laugh immoderately at beholding their insect-warfare. Cardinal Richelieu used to seek amusement in violent exercise, and was found by De Grammont jumping with his servant, to see which could leap the highest. The great logician, Samuel Clarke, was equally fond of such salutory interludes to his hours of meditation, and has been discovered leaping over tables and chairs. Once, observing the approach of a pedant, he said: 'Now we must leave off, for a fool is coming in!' The learned Petavius used to twirl his chair round and round for five minutes, at the end of every two hours. Tycho Brahe diverted himself with polishing glasses for spectacles. Paley, the author of *Natural Theology*, was so much given to angling, that he had his portrait painted with a rod and line in his hand. Louis XVI., of sad memory, amused himself with lock-making. Salvator Rosa used to perform in extempore comedies, and take the character of a mountebank in the streets of Rome. Anthony Magliabecchi, the famous librarian to the Duke of Tuscany, took a great interest in the spiders which thronged his apartments; and while sitting amongst his mountains of books, would caution his visitors 'not to hurt the spiders!' Moses Mendelssohn, surnamed the Jewish Socrates, would sometimes seek relief from too much thought in standing at his window and counting the tiles upon his neighbour's roof. Thomas Warton, the poetical antiquary, used to associate with the school-boys, while visiting his brother, Dr J. Warton. Campbell says: 'When engaged with them in some culinary occupation, and when alarmed by the sudden approach of the master, he has been known to hide himself in a dark corner of the kitchen, and has been

dragged from thence by the doctor, who had taken him for some great boy. Cowper kept hares, and made bird-cages. Dr Johnson was so fond of his cat, that he would even go out himself to buy oysters for Puss, because his servant was too proud to do so. Goethe kept a tame snake, but hated dogs. Ariosto delighted in gardening; but he destroyed all he planted, by turning up the mould to see if the seeds were germinating. Thomson had his garden at Richmond, respecting which the old story of how he ate peaches off the trees with his hands in his pockets is related. Gibbon was a lazy man. Coleridge was content to sit from morning till night threading the dreamy mazes of his own mind. Gray said that he wished to be always lying on sofas, reading eternal new novels of Crebillon and Marivaux. Fenton the eminent scholar, died from sheer inactivity: he rose late, and when he had risen, sat down to his books and papers. A woman who waited upon him in his lodgings said, that 'he would lie a-bed and be fed with a spoon.' Contrary examples to that of Sir Walter Scott, who wrote all his finest works before breakfast!

To return to the recreations of celebrated persons. Oliver Cromwell is said to have sometimes cast aside his Puritan gravity, and played at Blind-man's-buff with his daughters and attendants. Henri Quatre delighted to go about in disguise among the peasantry. Charles II.'s most innocent amusement consisted in feeding the ducks in St James's Park, and in rearing numbers of those beautiful spaniels that still bear his name. Beethoven would splash in cold water at all times of the day, till his chamber was swamped, and the water oozed through the flooring to the rooms beneath; he would also walk out in the dewy fields at night or morning without shoes or stockings. Shelley took an unaccountable delight in floating little paper-boats on any piece of water he chanced to be near. There is a pond on Hampstead-heath which has often borne his tiny fleets; and there is an anecdote related of him—rather too good, we fear, to be true—which says, that being one day beside the Serpentine, and having no other paper in his pocket wherewith to indulge his passion for ship-building, he actually folded a bank-bill for fifty pounds into the desired shape; launched the little craft upon its voyage; watched its steady progress with paternal anxiety; and, finally, went over and received it in safety at the opposite side.

This paper might be extended almost indefinitely; but there must be limits, even to an essay, and certainly to the good-nature of our readers.

#### IODINE.

Iodine derives its name from *iodos*, a Greek word signifying violet-coloured; but the transcendent beauty of the colour of its vapour requires further elucidation than simply saying that it has a violet hue. If a little iodine be placed on a hot tile, it rises into a magnificent dense vapour, fit for the last scene of a theatrical representation. This remarkable substance was discovered by accident about forty years ago. At that period chemical philosophy was in great repute, owing principally to the brilliant discoveries of Sir Humphry Davy. So singular a substance as iodine was to Davy a source of infinite pleasure. He studied its nature and properties with the fondness and zeal of a child at a Puzzle-map. His great aim was to prove its compound nature; but in this he failed; and to this day it is believed to be one of the primitive elements of the world we live in. Iodine is found in almost every natural substance with which we are acquainted, although in very minute portions. The sea furnishes an inexhaustible supply of iodine; all the fish, the shells, the sponges, and weeds of the ocean, yield it in passing through the chemical sieve. Whatever be the food of sea-weeds, it is certain that iodine forms a portion of their daily banquet; and to these beautiful plants we turn when iodine is to be

manufactured for commercial purposes. The weeds cast up by the boiling surf upon the desolate shores of the sea-islands, would at first sight appear among the most useless things in the world; but they are not; their mission is fulfilled; they have drawn the iodine from the briny wave, and are ready to yield it up for the benefit and happiness of man. The inhabitants of the Tyrol are subject to a very painful disease, called goitre or cretinism; for this malady iodine is a perfect cure. Go, and have your portrait painted as you are. Photography tells the whole truth without flattery; and the colours used in the process are only silver and iodine.—*Septimus Piesse.*

#### LABOUR IS PRAYER.

LABORARE est orare :

We, black-handed sons of toil,  
From the coal-mine and the anvil,  
And the delving of the soil—  
From the loom, the wharf, the warehouse,  
And the ever-whirling mill—  
Out of grim and hungry silence  
Lift a weak voice, small and still:  
'Laborare est orare :'  
Man, dost hear us?—God, He will!

We who strive to keep from starving  
Wan-faced wives, not always mild,  
Trying not to curse Heaven's givings  
When it sends another child;  
We who, worn-out, doze on Sundays  
O'er the Book we vainly read,  
Cannot understand the parson  
In those words he calls the creed:  
'Laborare est orare ;'  
Then—good sooth! we pray indeed.

We, poor women, feeble-hearted,  
Large of love, in wisdom small,  
Who the world's incessant battle  
Cannot comprehend at all;  
All the mysteries of the churches,  
All the conflicts of the state;  
When child-smiles teach—'God is loving,'  
Or child-coffins—'God is great :'  
'Laborare est orare ;'  
We, too, at His footstool wait.

LABORARE est orare :

Hear it, ye of spirit poor  
Who sit crouching at the threshold  
While your brethren beat the door;  
Ye whose ignorance stands wringing  
Hands, dark-seamed with toil, nor dares  
Lift so much as eyes to heaven—  
Lo! all life this truth declares:  
'Laborare est orare ;'  
And the whole earth rings with prayers.

#### VALUE OF LAND IN THE CITY.

Observing by a communication in a recent impression, that an endeavour has been made to throw some doubt on the accuracy of your statements on the above subject, I beg to inform you that a piece of land on the south side of Cornhill, having a frontage of 58 feet by a depth of 17 feet, has been within the last few days let on lease for a building term at a ground-rent of L.900 per annum. This, I think, will be found to be a higher rate per acre than any plot heretofore let. I may add, that the ground in question is the property of the parish of St Michael, Cornhill, and was let by public tender.—[Calculated at thirty years' purchase, the sum produced is at the rate of L.1,182,030 per acre!—Ed.]—*Correspondent of the Builder.*

Printed and Published by W. and R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 359 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by J. M'GLASHAN, 50 Upper Sackville Street, DUBLIN, and all Booksellers.